

PROTECTIVE SLEEVE FOR EXPANDABLE TUBULARS**Cross Reference To Related Applications**

[001] The present application claims the benefit of the filing dates of (1) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,196, attorney docket no 25791.127, filed on 9/20/2002, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[002] The present application is related to the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility

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Background of the Invention

[003] This invention relates generally to oil and gas exploration, and in particular to forming and repairing wellbore casings to facilitate oil and gas exploration.

[004] Conventionally, when a wellbore is created, a number of casings are installed in the borehole to prevent collapse of the borehole wall and to prevent undesired outflow of drilling fluid into the formation or inflow of fluid from the formation into the borehole. The borehole is drilled in intervals whereby a casing which is to be installed in a lower borehole interval is lowered through a previously installed casing of an upper borehole interval. As a consequence of this procedure the casing of the lower interval is of smaller diameter than the casing of the upper interval. Thus, the casings are in a nested arrangement with casing diameters decreasing in downward direction. Cement annuli are provided between the outer surfaces of the casings and the borehole wall to seal the casings from the borehole wall. As a consequence of this nested arrangement a relatively large borehole diameter is required at the upper part of the wellbore. Such a large borehole diameter involves increased costs due to heavy casing handling equipment, large drill bits and increased volumes of

drilling fluid and drill cuttings. Moreover, increased drilling rig time is involved due to required cement pumping, cement hardening, required equipment changes due to large variations in hole diameters drilled in the course of the well, and the large volume of cuttings drilled and removed.

[005] During oil exploration, a wellbore typically traverses a number of zones within a subterranean formation. Wellbore casings are then formed in the wellbore by radially expanding and plastically deforming tubular members that are coupled to one another by threaded connections. Existing methods for radially expanding and plastically deforming tubular members coupled to one another by threaded connections are not always reliable and do not always produce satisfactory results. In particular, the threaded connections can be damaged during the radial expansion process. Furthermore, the threaded connections between adjacent tubular members, whether radially expanded or not, are typically not sufficiently coupled to permit the transmission of energy through the tubular members from the surface to the downhole location. Further, the damaged threads may permit undesirable leakage between the inside of the casing and the exterior of the casing.

[006] The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the limitations of the existing procedures for forming and/or repairing wellbore casings.

Summary of the Invention

[007] According to one aspect of the present invention, an assembly is provided that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, an external sleeve including: a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member, and a second box member at another end including internal threads, a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve, and an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve.

[008] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for forming a wellbore casing is provided that includes positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[009] According to another aspect of the present invention, an apparatus is provided that includes a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation, and a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore. The wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process including: positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within the wellbore, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.

[0010] According to another aspect of the present invention, a system for forming a wellbore casing is provided that includes means for positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary

embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0011] According to another aspect of the present invention, an assembly is provided that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve, and an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members.

[0012] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably coupled to a second tubular member is provided that includes providing a stress concentrator on at least one of the first and second tubular members, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0013] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, is provided that includes spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a plurality of groups, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0014] Fig. 1 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of an embodiment of a first tubular coupled to a second tubular by internal and external sleeves.

[0015] Fig. 2 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of another embodiment of a first tubular coupled to a second tubular by internal and external sleeves.

[0016] Fig. 3 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of an embodiment of a first tubular member coupled to a second tubular member including an internal sleeve.

Detailed Description of the Illustrative Embodiments

[0017] Referring to Fig. 1, a first tubular member 10 that defines a passage 10a includes a pin member 12 that includes external threads 14 that engage internal threads 16 of a first box member 18 of an external sleeve 20. Internal threads 22 of a second box member 24 of the external sleeve 20 engage external threads 26 of a pin member 28 of a second tubular member 30 that defines a passage 30a. An internal sleeve 32 having an external flange 34 including upper and lower torque shoulders, 36 and 38, is coupled to the ends of the pin members, 12 and 28, of the first and second tubular members, 10 and 30, respectively. In an exemplary embodiment, the torque shoulders, 36 and 38, of the external flange 34 of the internal sleeve 32 engage and mate with corresponding torque shoulders, 40 and 42, provided on the ends of the pin members, 12 and 28, respectively, and the external surface of the external flange engages the internal surface of the external sleeve 20. The first tubular member 10, the external sleeve 20, the second tubular

member 30, and the internal sleeve 32 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 10/016,467, attorney docket no. 25791.70, filed on 12/10/2001, (31) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/343,674, attorney docket no. 25791.68, filed on 12/27/2001, (32) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/346,309, attorney docket no. 25791.92, filed on 1/7/2002, (33) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/372,048, attorney docket no.

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[0018] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 10, the external sleeve 20, the second tubular member 30, and the internal sleeve 32 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, external sleeve, second tubular member, and/or the internal sleeve to be fluid tight.

[0019] Referring to Fig. 2, a first tubular member 110 that defines a passage 110a includes a pin member 112 that includes external threads 114 that engage internal threads 116 of a first box member 118 of an external sleeve 120. Internal threads 122 of a second box member 124 of the external sleeve 120 engage external threads 126 of a pin member 128 of a second tubular member 130 that defines a passage 130a. The ends of the pin members, 112 and 126, of the first and second tubular members, 110 and 130, mate with and are received within upper and lower annular recesses, 132 and 134, defined within an external flange 136 of an internal sleeve 138, and the external surface of the external flange of the internal sleeve engages the internal surface of the external sleeve 120. The first tubular member 110, the external sleeve 120, the second tubular member 122, and the internal sleeve 138 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no.

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[0020] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 110, the external sleeve 120, the second tubular member 130, and the internal sleeve 138 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, external sleeve, second tubular member, and/or the internal sleeve to be fluid tight.

[0021] Referring to Fig. 3, a first tubular member 210 that defines a passage 210a includes a pin member 212 that includes spaced apart external threads, 214a, 214b, and 214c, that engage corresponding spaced apart internal threads, 216a, 216b, and 216c, of a box member 218 of a second tubular member 220 that defines a passage 220a. An external sleeve 222 is coupled and overlaps with the external surfaces of the first and second tubular members 210 and 220. An annular recess 224 is provided in the external surface of the end of the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 for reasons to be described. The first tubular member 210, the second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S.

provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 10/016,467, attorney docket no. 25791.70, filed on 12/10/2001, (31) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/343,674, attorney docket no. 25791.68, filed on 12/27/2001, (32) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/346,309, attorney docket no. 25791.92, filed on 1/7/2002, (33) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/372,048, attorney docket no. 25791.93, filed on 4/12/2002, (34) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/380,147, attorney docket no. 25791.104, filed on 5/6/2002, (35) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/387,486, attorney docket no. 25791.107, filed on 6/10/2002, (36) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/387,961, attorney docket no. 25791.108, filed on 6/12/2002, (37) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/394,703, attorney docket no. 25791.90, filed on 6/26/2002, (38) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/397,284, attorney docket no. 25791.106, filed on 7/19/2002, (39) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/398,061, attorney docket no. 25791.110, filed on 7/24/2002, (40) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/405,610, attorney docket no. 25791.119, filed on 8/23/2002, (41) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/405,394, attorney docket no. 25791.120, filed on 8/23/2002, (43) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60412,653, attorney docket no. 25791.118, filed on 9/20/2002, (44) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,544, attorney docket no. 25791.121, filed on 9/20/2002, (45) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,187, attorney docket no. 25791.128, filed on 9/20/2002, (46) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,371, attorney docket no. 25791.129, filed on 9/20/2002,

(47) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,542, attorney docket no. 25791.102, filed on 9/20/2002, (48) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,487, attorney docket no. 25791.112, filed on 9/20/2002, and (49) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,488, attorney docket no. 25791.114, filed on 9/20/2002, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0022] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, the second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, the second tubular member, and/or the external sleeve to be fluid tight. In an exemplary embodiment, during the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222, the annular recess 224 of the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 provides a stress concentration that enhances the sealing of the interface between the end of the pin member of the first tubular member and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220. In an exemplary embodiment, during the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222, the spaced apart external and internal threads, 214a-214c, and 216a-216c, of the first and second tubular members, 210 and 220, facilitate the formation of a fluid tight seal of the interface between the end of the pin member of the first tubular member and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220.

[0023] In an alternative embodiment of the illustrative embodiment of Fig. 3, the orientation of one or more of the various elements may be reversed. For example, the external sleeve 222 may be an internal sleeve, the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 may be a box member, and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220 may be a pin member.

[0024] An assembly has been described that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, an external sleeve including: a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member, and a second box member at another end including internal threads, a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve, and an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve. In an exemplary embodiment, the external flange of the internal sleeve defines an upper annular recess for receiving and mating with the first tubular member, and the external flange of the internal sleeve further defines a lower annular recess for receiving and mating with the second tubular member.

[0025] A method for forming a wellbore casing has been described that includes positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0026] An apparatus has been described that includes a wellbore that traverses a subterranean

formation, and a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore. The wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process including: positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within the wellbore, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.

[0027] A system for forming a wellbore casing has been described that includes means for positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0028] An assembly has been described that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve, and an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members. In an exemplary embodiment, the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads, and the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads. In an exemplary embodiment, the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member includes a stress concentrator. In an exemplary embodiment, the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member include a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads, the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member include a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads, and the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.

[0029] A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably coupled to a second tubular member has been described that includes providing a stress concentrator on at least one of the first and second tubular members, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0030] A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, has been described that includes spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a plurality of groups, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0031] It is understood that variations may be made in the foregoing without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, the teachings of the present illustrative embodiments may be used to provide an insulated wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support. Furthermore, the elements and teachings of the various illustrative embodiments may be combined in whole or in part in some or all of the illustrative embodiments.

[0032] Although illustrative embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, a wide range of modification, changes and substitution is contemplated in the foregoing disclosure. In some

instances, some features of the present invention may be employed without a corresponding use of the other features. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the appended claims be construed broadly and in a manner consistent with the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. An assembly, comprising:
 - a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads;
 - an external sleeve comprising:
 - a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member; and
 - a second box member at another end including internal threads;
 - a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve; and
 - an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve.
2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the external flange of the internal sleeve defines an upper annular recess for receiving and mating with the first tubular member; and wherein the external flange of the internal sleeve further defines a lower annular recess for receiving and mating with the second tubular member.
3. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 1 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
4. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 2 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
5. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 1 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
6. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 2 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
7. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - means for positioning the assembly of claim 1 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean

- formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
8. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 2 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
9. An assembly, comprising:
a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads;
a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve; and
an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members.
10. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads; and wherein the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads.
11. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.
12. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads; wherein the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads; and wherein the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.
13. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 9 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
14. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 10 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;
and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
15. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 11 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;
and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
16. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 12 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;

- and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
17. An apparatus, comprising:
a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 9 within the wellbore; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
18. An apparatus, comprising:
a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 10 within the wellbore; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
19. An apparatus, comprising:
a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 11 within the wellbore; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
19. An apparatus, comprising:
a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 12 within the wellbore; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
20. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 9 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
21. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 10 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
22. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 11 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean

- formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
23. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 12 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean
formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
24. A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably
coupled to a second tubular member, comprising:
providing a stress concentrator one at least one of the first and second tubular members; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.
25. A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external
threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first
tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, comprising:
spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a
plurality of groups; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

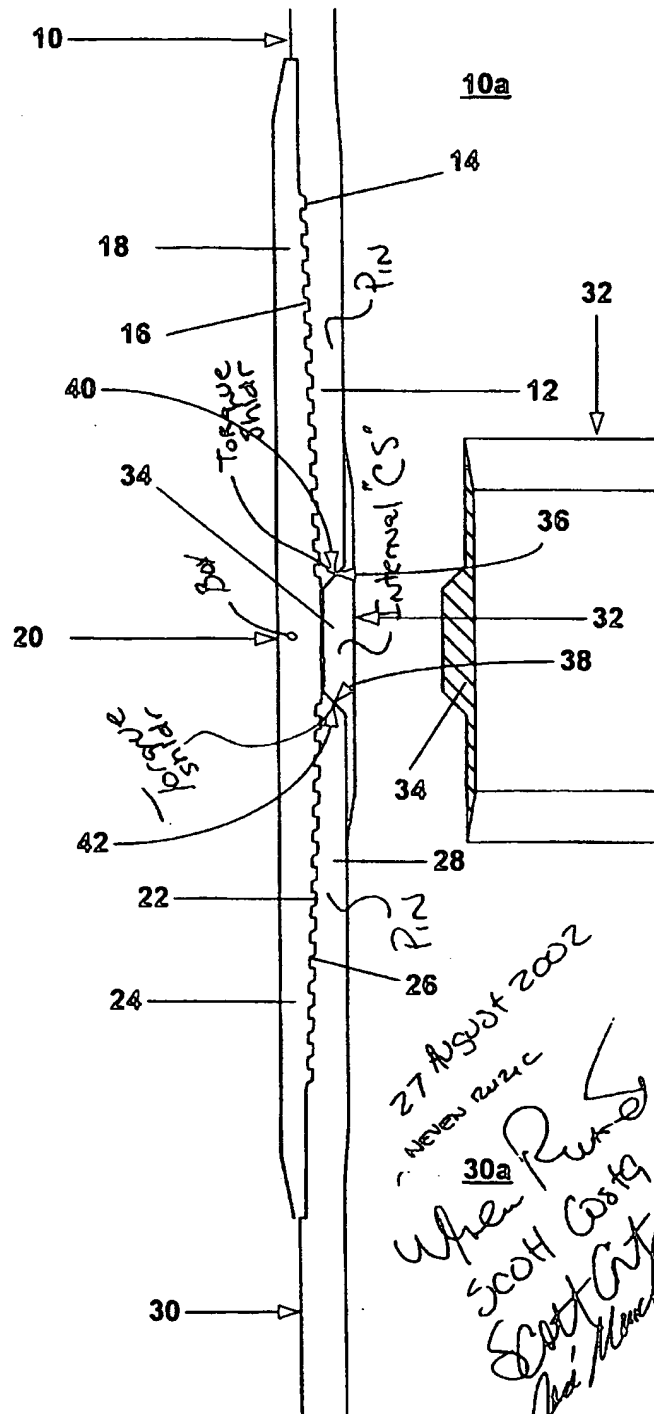


Fig. 1

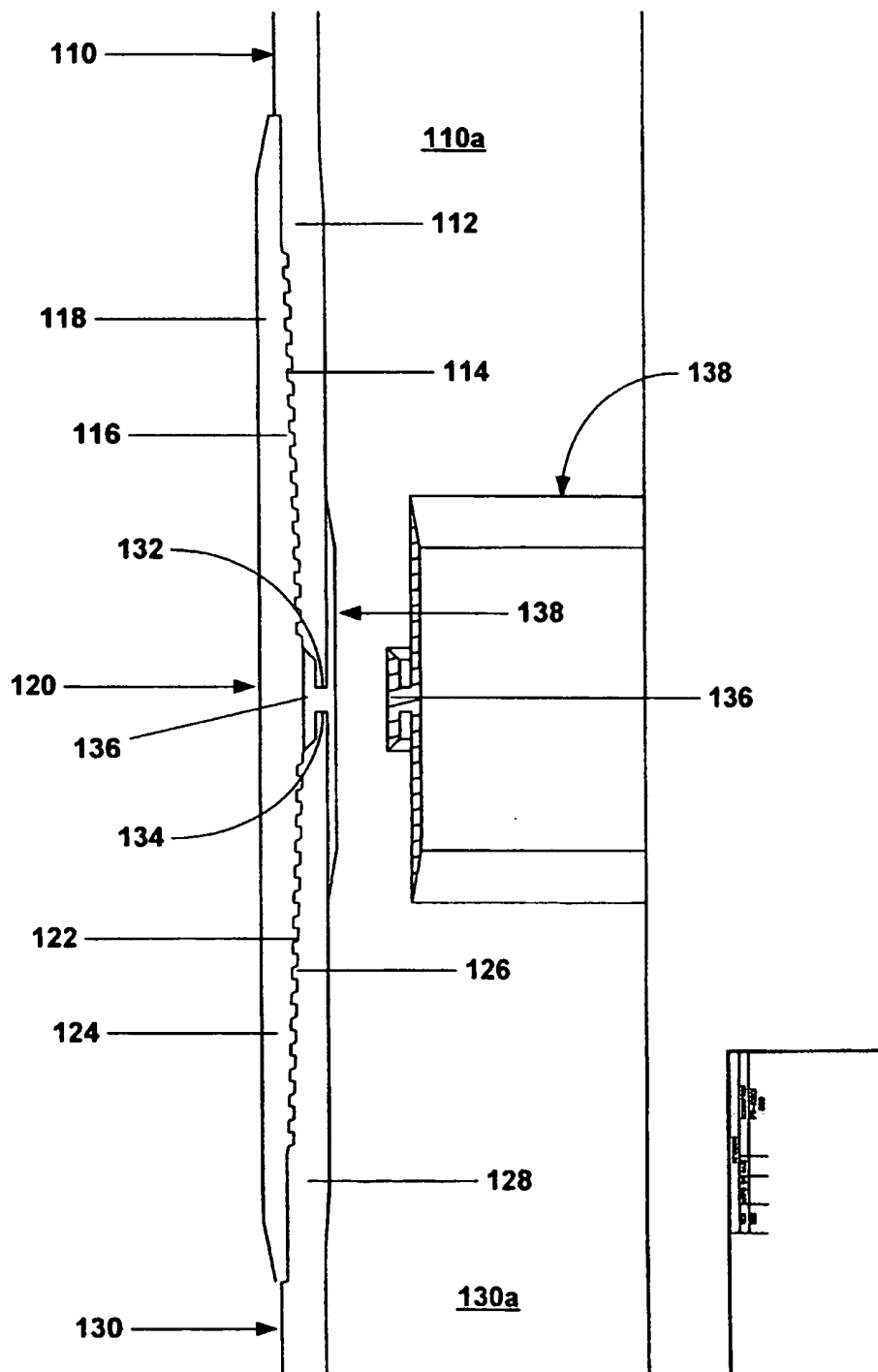


Fig. 2

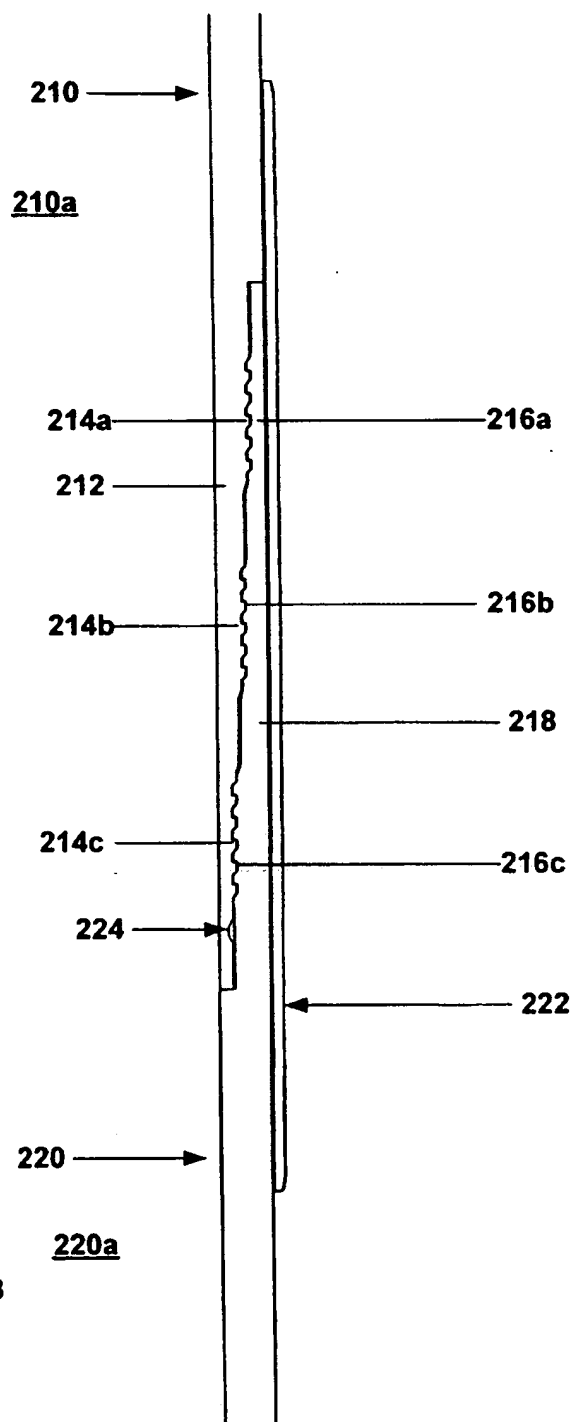


Fig. 3

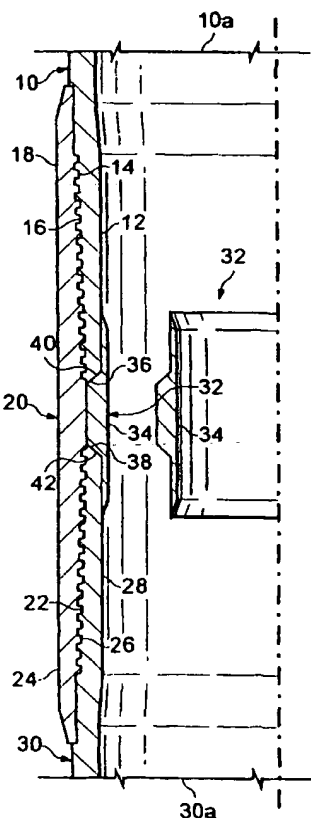
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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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PROTECTIVE SLEEVE FOR EXPANDABLE TUBULARS**Cross Reference To Related Applications**

[001] The present application claims the benefit of the filing dates of (1) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,196, attorney docket no 25791.127, filed on 9/20/2002, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[002] The present application is related to the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility

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Background of the Invention

[003] This invention relates generally to oil and gas exploration, and in particular to forming and repairing wellbore casings to facilitate oil and gas exploration.

[004] Conventionally, when a wellbore is created, a number of casings are installed in the borehole to prevent collapse of the borehole wall and to prevent undesired outflow of drilling fluid into the formation or inflow of fluid from the formation into the borehole. The borehole is drilled in intervals whereby a casing which is to be installed in a lower borehole interval is lowered through a previously installed casing of an upper borehole interval. As a consequence of this procedure the casing of the lower interval is of smaller diameter than the casing of the upper interval. Thus, the casings are in a nested arrangement with casing diameters decreasing in downward direction. Cement annuli are provided between the outer surfaces of the casings and the borehole wall to seal the casings from the borehole wall. As a consequence of this nested arrangement a relatively large borehole diameter is required at the upper part of the wellbore. Such a large borehole diameter involves increased costs due to heavy casing handling equipment, large drill bits and increased volumes of

drilling fluid and drill cuttings. Moreover, increased drilling rig time is involved due to required cement pumping, cement hardening, required equipment changes due to large variations in hole diameters drilled in the course of the well, and the large volume of cuttings drilled and removed.

[005] During oil exploration, a wellbore typically traverses a number of zones within a subterranean formation. Wellbore casings are then formed in the wellbore by radially expanding and plastically deforming tubular members that are coupled to one another by threaded connections existing methods for radially expanding and plastically deforming tubular members coupled to one another by threaded connections are not always reliable and do not always produce satisfactory results. In particular, the threaded connections can be damaged during the radial expansion process. Furthermore, the threaded connections between adjacent tubular members, whether radially expanded or not, are typically not sufficiently coupled to permit the transmission of energy through the tubular members from the surface to the downhole location. Further, the damaged threads may permit undesirable leakage between the inside of the casing and the exterior of the casing.

[006] The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the limitations of the existing procedures for forming and/or repairing wellbore casings.

Summary of the Invention

[007] According to one aspect of the present invention, an assembly is provided that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, an external sleeve including: a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member, and a second box member at another end including internal threads, a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve, and an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve.

[008] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for forming a wellbore casing is provided that includes positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[009] According to another aspect of the present invention, an apparatus is provided that includes a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation, and a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore. The wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process including: positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within the wellbore, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.

[0010] According to another aspect of the present invention, a system for forming a wellbore casing is provided that includes means for positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary

embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0011] According to another aspect of the present invention, an assembly is provided that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve, and an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members.

[0012] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably coupled to a second tubular member is provided that includes providing a stress concentrator one at least one of the first and second tubular members, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0013] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, is provided that includes spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a plurality of groups, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0014] Fig. 1 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of an embodiment of a first tubular coupled to a second tubular by internal and external sleeves.

[0015] Fig. 2 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of another embodiment of a first tubular coupled to a second tubular by internal and external sleeves.

[0016] Fig. 3 is a fragmentary cross-sectional illustration of an embodiment of a first tubular member coupled to a second tubular member including an internal sleeve.

Detailed Description of the Illustrative Embodiments

[0017] Referring to Fig. 1, a first tubular member 10 that defines a passage 10a includes a pin member 12 that includes external threads 14 that engage internal threads 16 of a first box member 18 of an external sleeve 20. Internal threads 22 of a second box member 24 of the external sleeve 20 engage external threads 26 of a pin member 28 of a second tubular member 30 that defines a passage 30a. An internal sleeve 32 having an external flange 34 including upper and lower torque shoulders, 36 and 38, is coupled to the ends of the pin members, 12 and 28, of the first and second tubular members, 10 and 30, respectively. In an exemplary embodiment, the torque shoulders, 36 and 38, of the external flange 34 of the internal sleeve 32 engage and mate with corresponding torque shoulders, 40 and 42, provided on the ends of the pin members, 12 and 28, respectively, and the external surface of the external flange engages the internal surface of the external sleeve 20. The first tubular member 10, the external sleeve 20, the second tubular

member 30, and the internal sleeve 32 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 10/016,467, attorney docket no. 25791.70, filed on 12/10/2001, (31) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/343,674, attorney docket no. 25791.68, filed on 12/27/2001, (32) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/346,309, attorney docket no. 25791.92, filed on 1/7/2002, (33) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/372,048, attorney docket no.

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[0018] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 10, the external sleeve 20, the second tubular member 30, and the internal sleeve 32 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, external sleeve, second tubular member, and/or the internal sleeve to be fluid tight.

[0019] Referring to Fig. 2, a first tubular member 110 that defines a passage 110a includes a pin member 112 that includes external threads 114 that engage internal threads 116 of a first box member 118 of an external sleeve 120. Internal threads 122 of a second box member 124 of the external sleeve 120 engage external threads 126 of a pin member 128 of a second tubular member 130 that defines a passage 130a. The ends of the pin members, 112 and 126, of the first and second tubular members, 110 and 130, mate with and are received within upper and lower annular recesses, 132 and 134, defined within an external flange 136 of an internal sleeve 138, and the external surface of the external flange of the internal sleeve engages the internal surface of the external sleeve 120. The first tubular member 110, the external sleeve 120, the second tubular member 122, and the internal sleeve 138 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no.

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[0020] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 110, the external sleeve 120, the second tubular member 130, and the internal sleeve 138 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, external sleeve, second tubular member, and/or the internal sleeve to be fluid tight.

[0021] Referring to Fig. 3, a first tubular member 210 that defines a passage 210a includes a pin member 212 that includes spaced apart external threads, 214a, 214b, and 214c, that engage corresponding spaced apart internal threads, 216a, 216b, and 216c, of a box member 218 of a second tubular member 220 that defines a passage 220a. An external sleeve 222 is coupled and overlaps with the external surfaces of the first and second tubular members 210 and 220. An annular recess 224 is provided in the external surface of the end of the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 for reasons to be described. The first tubular member 210, the second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222 may be radially expanded and plastically deformed using any number of conventional methods and apparatus and/or as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/454,139, attorney docket no. 25791.03.02, filed on 12/3/1999, (2) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/510,913, attorney docket no. 25791.7.02, filed on 2/23/2000, (3) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/502,350, attorney docket no. 25791.8.02, filed on 2/10/2000, (4) U.S. patent no. 6,328,113, (5) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/523,460, attorney docket no. 25791.11.02, filed on 3/10/2000, (6) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/512,895, attorney docket no. 25791.12.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (7) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/511,941, attorney docket no. 25791.16.02, filed on 2/24/2000, (8) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/588,946, attorney docket no. 25791.17.02, filed on 6/7/2000, (9) U.S. patent application serial no. 09/559,122, attorney docket no. 25791.23.02, filed on 4/26/2000, (10) PCT patent application serial no. PCT/US00/18635, attorney docket no. 25791.25.02, filed on 7/9/2000, (11) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/162,671, attorney docket no. 25791.27, filed on 11/1/1999, (12) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/154,047, attorney docket no. 25791.29, filed on 9/16/1999, (13) U.S.

provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,082, attorney docket no. 25791.34, filed on 10/12/1999, (14) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,039, attorney docket no. 25791.36, filed on 10/12/1999, (15) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/159,033, attorney docket no. 25791.37, filed on 10/12/1999, (16) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/212,359, attorney docket no. 25791.38, filed on 6/19/2000, (17) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/165,228, attorney docket no. 25791.39, filed on 11/12/1999, (18) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,443, attorney docket no. 25791.45, filed on 7/28/2000, (19) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/221,645, attorney docket no. 25791.46, filed on 7/28/2000, (20) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/233,638, attorney docket no. 25791.47, filed on 9/18/2000, (21) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/237,334, attorney docket no. 25791.48, filed on 10/2/2000, (22) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/270,007, attorney docket no. 25791.50, filed on 2/20/2001, (23) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/262,434, attorney docket no. 25791.51, filed on 1/17/2001, (24) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/259,486, attorney docket no. 25791.52, filed on 1/3/2001, (25) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/303,740, attorney docket no. 25791.61, filed on 7/6/2001, (26) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/313,453, attorney docket no. 25791.59, filed on 8/20/2001, (27) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/317,985, attorney docket no. 25791.67, filed on 9/6/2001, (28) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/3318,386, attorney docket no. 25791.67.02, filed on 9/10/2001, (29) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 09/969,922, attorney docket no. 25791.69, filed on 10/3/2001, (30) U.S. utility patent application serial no. 10/016,467, attorney docket no. 25791.70, filed on 12/10/2001, (31) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/343,674, attorney docket no. 25791.68, filed on 12/27/2001, (32) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/346,309, attorney docket no. 25791.92, filed on 1/7/2002, (33) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/372,048, attorney docket no. 25791.93, filed on 4/12/2002, (34) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/380,147, attorney docket no. 25791.104, filed on 5/6/2002, (35) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/387,486, attorney docket no. 25791.107, filed on 6/10/2002, (36) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/387,961, attorney docket no. 25791.108, filed on 6/12/2002, (37) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/394,703, attorney docket no. 25791.90, filed on 6/26/2002, (38) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/397,284, attorney docket no. 25791.106, filed on 7/19/2002, (39) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/398,061, attorney docket no. 25791.110, filed on 7/24/2002, (40) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/405,610, attorney docket no. 25791.119, filed on 8/23/2002, (41) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/405,394, attorney docket no. 25791.120, filed on 8/23/2002, (43) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,653, attorney docket no. 25791.118, filed on 9/20/2002, (44) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,544, attorney docket no. 25791.121, filed on 9/20/2002, (45) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,187, attorney docket no. 25791.128, filed on 9/20/2002, (46) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,371, attorney docket no. 25791.129, filed on 9/20/2002,

(47) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,542, attorney docket no. 25791.102, filed on 9/20/2002, (48) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,487, attorney docket no. 25791.112, filed on 9/20/2002, and (49) U.S. provisional patent application serial no. 60/412,488, attorney docket no. 25791.114, filed on 9/20/2002, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0022] In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, the second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222 causes the interfaces between one or more of the first tubular member, the second tubular member, and/or the external sleeve to be fluid tight. In an exemplary embodiment, during the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222, the annular recess 224 of the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 provides a stress concentration that enhances the sealing of the interface between the end of the pin member of the first tubular member and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220. In an exemplary embodiment, during the radial expansion and plastic deformation of the first tubular member 210, second tubular member 220, and the external sleeve 222, the spaced apart external and internal threads, 214a-214c, and 216a-216c, of the first and second tubular members, 210 and 220, facilitate the formation of a fluid tight seal of the interface between the end of the pin member of the first tubular member and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220.

[0023] In an alternative embodiment of the illustrative embodiment of Fig. 3, the orientation of one or more of the various elements may be reversed. For example, the external sleeve 222 may be an internal sleeve, the pin member 212 of the first tubular member 210 may be a box member, and the box member 218 of the second tubular member 220 may be a pin member.

[0024] An assembly has been described that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, an external sleeve including: a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member, and a second box member at another end including internal threads, a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve, and an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve. In an exemplary embodiment, the external flange of the internal sleeve defines an upper annular recess for receiving and mating with the first tubular member, and the external flange of the internal sleeve further defines a lower annular recess for receiving and mating with the second tubular member.

[0025] A method for forming a wellbore casing has been described that includes positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0026] An apparatus has been described that includes a wellbore that traverses a subterranean

formation, and a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore. The wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process including: positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within the wellbore, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.

[0027] A system for forming a wellbore casing has been described that includes means for positioning any one, portion, or combination, of the exemplary embodiments described and illustrated within the present application within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation, and means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

[0028] An assembly has been described that includes a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads, a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve, and an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members. In an exemplary embodiment, the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads, and the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads. In an exemplary embodiment, the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member includes a stress concentrator. In an exemplary embodiment, the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member include a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads, the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member include a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads, and the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.

[0029] A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably coupled to a second tubular member has been described that includes providing a stress concentrator on at least one of the first and second tubular members, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0030] A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, has been described that includes spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a plurality of groups, and radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

[0031] It is understood that variations may be made in the foregoing without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, the teachings of the present illustrative embodiments may be used to provide an insulated wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support. Furthermore, the elements and teachings of the various illustrative embodiments may be combined in whole or in part in some or all of the illustrative embodiments.

[0032] Although illustrative embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, a wide range of modification, changes and substitution is contemplated in the foregoing disclosure. In some

instances, some features of the present invention may be employed without a corresponding use of the other features. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the appended claims be construed broadly and in a manner consistent with the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. An assembly, comprising:
 - a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads;
 - an external sleeve comprising:
 - a first box member at one end including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member; and
 - a second box member at another end including internal threads;
 - a second tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads coupled to the internal threads of the second box member of the external sleeve; and
 - an internal sleeve that receives the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members comprising an external flange that engages the ends of the pin members of the first and second tubular members and the external sleeve.
2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the external flange of the internal sleeve defines an upper annular recess for receiving and mating with the first tubular member; and wherein the external flange of the internal sleeve further defines a lower annular recess for receiving and mating with the second tubular member.
3. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 1 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
4. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 2 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
5. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 1 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
6. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 2 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
7. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - means for positioning the assembly of claim 1 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean

- formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
8. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 2 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
9. An assembly, comprising:
a first tubular member comprising a pin member including external threads;
a second tubular member comprising a box member including internal threads coupled to the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular sleeve; and
an external sleeve coupled to and overlapping with the ends of the first and second tubular members.
10. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads; and wherein the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads.
11. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.
12. The assembly of claim 9, wherein the external threads of the pin member of the first tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of external threads; wherein the internal threads of the box member of the second tubular member comprise a plurality of spaced apart groups of internal threads; and wherein the external surface end of the pin member of the first tubular member comprises a stress concentrator.
13. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 9 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
14. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 10 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;
and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
15. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 11 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;
and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
16. A method for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
positioning the assembly of claim 12 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation;

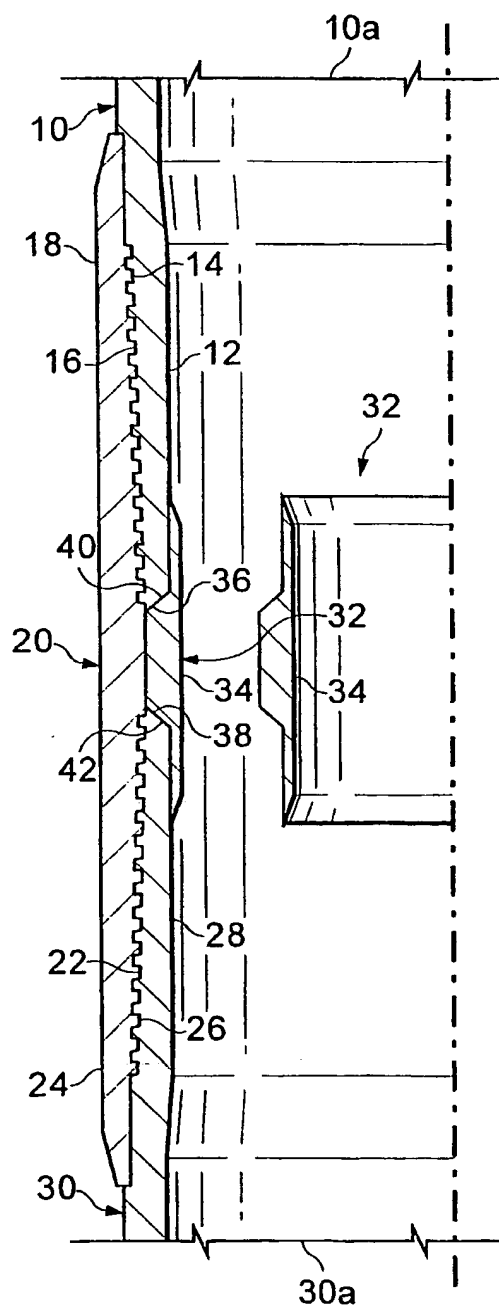
and

radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.

17. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 9 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
18. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 10 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
19. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 11 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
19. An apparatus, comprising:
 - a wellbore that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - a wellbore casing positioned within and coupled to the wellbore;
 - wherein the wellbore casing is coupled to the wellbore by a process comprising:
 - positioning the assembly of claim 12 within the wellbore; and
 - radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the wellbore.
20. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - means for positioning the assembly of claim 9 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
21. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - means for positioning the assembly of claim 10 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
 - means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
22. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
 - means for positioning the assembly of claim 11 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean

- formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
23. A system for forming a wellbore casing, comprising:
means for positioning the assembly of claim 12 within a borehole that traverses a subterranean formation; and
means for radially expanding and plastically deforming the assembly within the borehole.
24. A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member that is threadably coupled to a second tubular member, comprising:
providing a stress concentrator one at least one of the first and second tubular members; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.
25. A method for providing a fluid tight seal between a first tubular member comprising external threads and a second tubular member comprising internal threads, wherein the external threads of the first tubular member engage the internal threads of the second tubular member, comprising:
spacing apart the external and internal threads of the first and second tubular members into a plurality of groups; and
radially expanding and plastically deforming the first and second tubular members.

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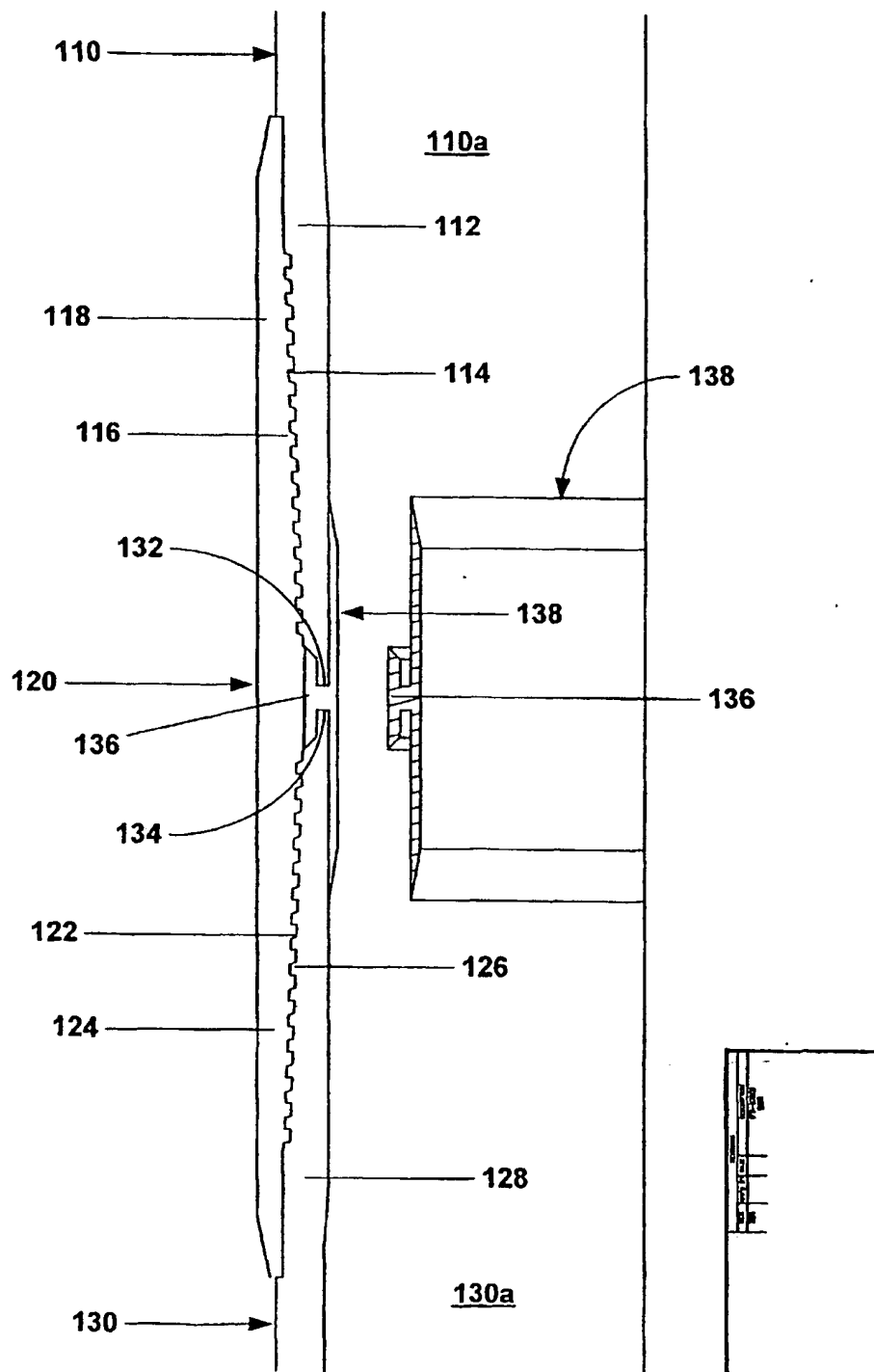


Fig. 2

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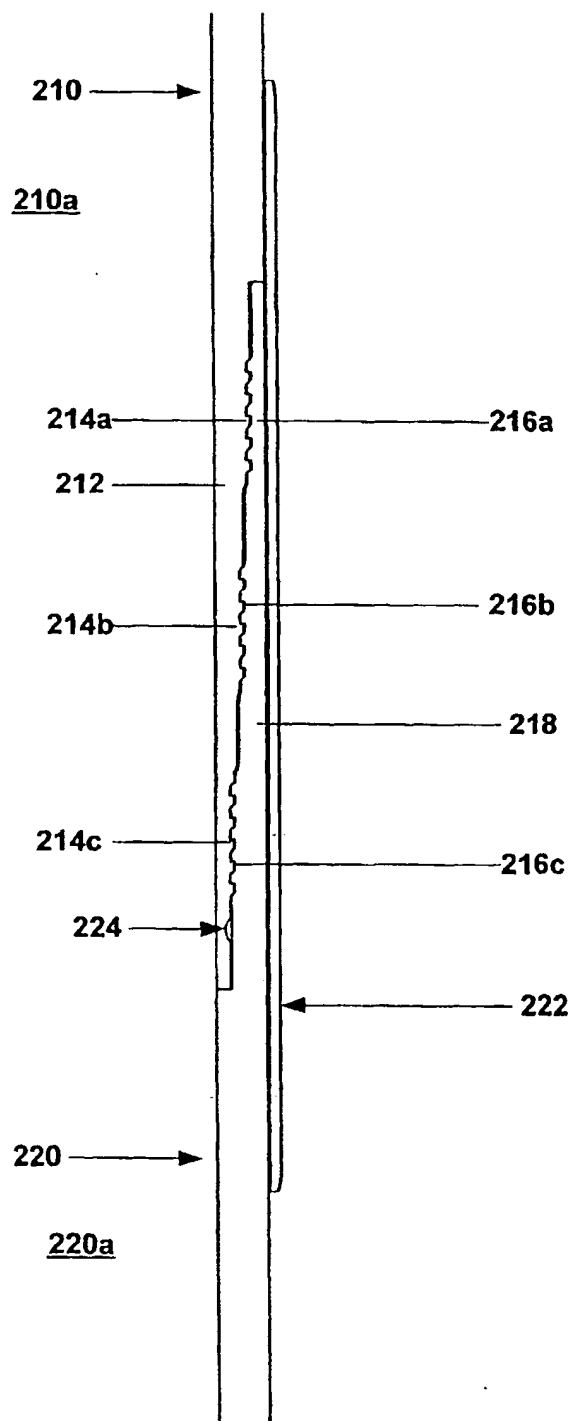


Fig. 3

WO 2004/027786 A3



ES, IT, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, RO,
SE, SI, SK, TR). OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM,
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : E21B 43/10

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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 166/206,207,242.1,242.6,380-382

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 4,388,971 A (PETERSON) 21 June 1983 (21.06.1983), see entire document, especially Figs. 1A-2D.	1-25
A	US 6,516,880 B1 (OTTEN et al.) 11 February 2003 (11.02.2003), see entire document, especially Figs. 1-24.	1-8
A	US 6,5654,875 B1 (BULLOCK) 20 May 2003 (20.05.2003), see entire document, especially Fig. 1.	9-25



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



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Date of the actual completion of the international search

22 January 2004 (22.01.2004)

Date of mailing of the international search report

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Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
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Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

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Telephone No. (703) 308-2168

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